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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: POTUS IN ASIA, AFGHANISTAN, SWIFT, RUSSIA,
TURKISH-KURDISH CONFLICT;BERLIN

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- [1](#)1. Lead Stories

Primetime TV newscasts and a few newspapers opened with stories on Defense Minister Guttenberg's visit to Afghanistan. Die Welt headlined: "NATO: exit from Afghanistan begins as of 2010." Sueddeutsche and FT Deutschland opened with criticism from "wise economists" of the coalition agreement. Other papers led with stories on energy policy, protests by students and the suicide of Germany's soccer goal keeper Robert Enke. Editorials focused on Afghanistan and Russian President Medvedev's annual address to the nation.

- [1](#)2. President Obama in Asia

Die Welt headlined "Obama is visiting a self-confident Japan," and remarked: "When Obama started his round trip through Asia in Japan today, he untypically focused on old and tested approaches because Tokyo is still the most reliable partner in the region.... With Yukio Hatoyama in Japan, Obama meets a prime minister whose thinking is very similar to that of Obama's. Both have an idealistic understanding of politics, the intention to limit the excesses of capitalism and to reach out internationally-Obama to the Middle East and Hatoyama to Asian neighbors.... Hatoyama focuses on communicating with his neighbors, particularly China; He dreams of an East Asian community with one currency. The question only is which role the U.S. can play in this. Although America wants to help integrate Asia and Hatoyama stresses how important America's participation is, China is not interested... Given an unpredictable China, Japan needs the U.S. nuclear shield and therefore inevitably continues to be a junior partner. Concerning relations with Beijing, Obama is thinking of his own interests: when he travels to

China on Sunday, he wants better access for American goods to the Chinese market, a more dollar-friendly currency policy and China's cooperation in the dispute with Iran."

FT Deutschland headlined "Obama is discovering China" and highlighted that "Obama is advancing rapprochement with China on his Asian tour. Americans pursue political as well as economic interests in the region. They want to win back lost power." In a separate article headlined "U.S. fears for its influence in Asia," the paper wrote: "President Obama must also improve the image of his country during his tour through Asia."

Frankfurter Allgemeine noted, in a report that quotes a White House spokesman as saying that Obama is the first American President who truly focuses on the Pacific, that "within the ten months of his presidency, Obama visited Europe four times and made stopovers in the Middle East—in Turkey and Iraq. He is now for the first time traveling to East Asia."

13. Strategy on Afghanistan

Die Welt led with the headline: "NATO: exit from Afghanistan begins as of 2010," noting that "NATO is planning to hand over certain territories to Afghan security forces as early as next year." The paper notes: "For the first time NATO is making clear what the long-demanded exit strategy could look like and when it might begin."

In a front-page editorial Die Welt wrote: "President Obama has obviously returned recent draft proposals to the planning

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departments. Experts for fighting insurgency believe that 600,000 soldiers would be necessary to create peace in the country. We can neither recruit that many soldiers nor could we fund them. Therefore, the goals must be more modest. If we succeed in permanently separating the Taliban from al Qaida terrorists, responsibility could be handed over to the Afghans within a few years. We must however prevent the impression that the recent mission was a mistake and that the soldiers killed there died in vain. Afghanistan is no longer a terror camp. This success must remain."

Frankfurter Allgemeine headlined "Obama not yet determined to increase troops—U.S. Ambassador in Kabul warns against taking premature steps." In an editorial, the paper remarked: "U.S. Ambassador to Kabul Eikenberry and Commander McChrystal were seen as a dream team: everything would get better if they had the necessary means. But it was only a dream because the two don't agree at all.... This is more than unpleasant and increases Washington's and NATO's dilemma. They call on President Karzai to root out corruption, adding that they might otherwise withdraw. This is an empty threat because NATO is not in Afghanistan to achieve 'good governance,' it is there in its own interest."

Under the headline "Plan of amateurs," Sueddeutsche editorialized that "Obama's new strategy on Afghanistan is talked down and therefore loses its power." The paper added: "All players must now demonstrate agreement and unity and express willingness to exert massive pressure. Obama and his team are closely watched because their decisions point the way to the future of the last step of the mission. This is about demonstrating political and military power, and supremacy. This is the only way to raise hope among Afghans and allies."

14. US-EU SWIFT Agreement

Berliner Zeitung and Frankfurter Rundschau carried a joint editorial: "It looks like Europeans were outsmarted in the negotiations with Washington. This alone is bad enough. However, it is audacious that the EU leadership wants to finalize the agreement one day before the Lisbon Treaty comes into force. After that, the approval of the EU parliament would be required. The CDU/CSU-FDP government does the right thing to block the project. It must under no circumstances give in. Such a sensitive document should not be agreed upon with out the participation of

parliamentarians. So far, the EU could not even credibly make clear that the U.S. terror investigators will treat the European banking data carefully. The leadership of the community is afraid of a debate because it fears its own citizens."

FT Deutschland (11/12) editorialized: "Shortly after the nerve-racking time following the attacks on September 11, 2001, it might have been understandable why the EU surrendered to the U.S. security madness. It no longer is. Until today, security authorities have not come up with any proof that such widespread interference with data protection rights is in a reasonable balance with the purpose. It is therefore all the more shameful that the Swedish EU presidency and the EU commission want to give the U.S. even more power. The U.S.-EU agreement reads as if the Department for Homeland Security dictated the terms... The most horrific thing is that the U.S. would be allowed to pass on the data to third countries. Those who know that Washington cooperates with dubious governments in the fight against terrorism must really be concerned.... National governments are the only forces that can still stop this nonsense. If the FDP takes its identity as a civil rights and data protection party seriously, it must make sure that the German government applies the emergency brakes."

15. President Medvedev's address to the nation

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Sueddeutsche editorialized: "Medvedev's analysis of the economic structures of the country is so critical that the head of the government must get the jitters. However, Putin must not be concerned about remaining in power. His popularity is still higher than that of Medvedev. The president must leave behind the shadow of his predecessor.... The key question therefore is: when will he be able to implement his ideas. The problems Russia has are enormous."

Frankfurter Allgemeine opined: "Russia must modernize all it has--this was the tone of Medvedev's speech.... These are great words. But Medvedev, who is the president at Putin's mercy, has not yet shown that he has the power to take action to back up his accurate words."

Die Welt opined: "More candidly than any of his post-Soviet predecessors, Russian President Medvedev has made clear to his fellow citizens that Russia is not fit at the moment. If the country wants to return to the top of the world, which a majority of the Russians indeed strive for, it must immediately be modernized.... However, like his predecessors, Medvedev portrays democracy and stability as contradictions and, if in doubt, he favors stability. With that, the modernization project faces the fate of many other campaigns before: it could disappear in the quagmire of bureaucracy."

FT Deutschland remarked in an editorial: "The new national beginning the president wants to initiate contradicts the real situation of the country. While Americans could at least dream of a different country throughout an election campaign, many Russians don't even dare to dream of such a thing. The difference between words and reality is not unique to Russia. However, in Russia's case the discrepancy between Medvedev's stated dynamism and democratic transparency on the one side and reality on the other side is particularly grotesque.... Medvedev's description of the ailing economy is correct. However, the announcement to lead Russia back to superpower status therefore sounds hollow... Apart from rhetorical changes, nothing has changed in Russia since Medvedev succeeded Putin a year and a half ago. Wherever Russia is going at the moment, it is not forward."

16. Turkish-Kurdish Conflict

Under the headline "Erdogan wants to do his bit for posterity," Tagesspiegel reports: "The Turkish Prime Minister presents to parliament a controversial plan to end the conflict with the Kurds. This Friday, Erdogan will deliver one of the most important speeches of his life, presenting a 15-point plan for a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish conflict. The prime minister knows that the Turkish

public is increasingly against this project because the impression has been created that the government courts PKK rebels. For Erdogan, it is the most important project of his term: If he can achieve a resolution to the Kurdish conflict, he will have done his bit for posterity."

MURPHY